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NEA FOR FRONT OFFICE. NSC FOR ABRAMS/SINGH/WATERS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 08/31/2017  
TAGS: [KWBG](#) [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [PTER](#) [PHUM](#) [IS](#)  
SUBJECT: CEC CHAIRMAN ON ELECTIONS DECREE, HAMAS, AND PA  
GOVERNMENT

Classified By: Acting Principal Officer Thomas M. Duffy, per reasons 1.  
4 (b) and (d)

11. (C) Summary. On August 23, Central Elections Commission (CEC) Chairman Hanna Nasir and Chief Electoral Officer Hisham Kuhayl told USAID and PolOff that legislative and presidential elections must include both the West Bank and Gaza. Nasir said that if Palestinian Authority (PA) President Mahmud Abbas (Abu Mazen) changes the electoral system from mixed (50 percent constituency/50 percent party list) to 100 percent proportional representation, the new system will be easier for the CEC to administer. He added, however, that by changing the rules of the game, Abu Mazen is demonstrating clear bias towards Fatah. Nasir said the elections law should remain "apolitical" and not require candidates to accept the PLO platform. He also said Palestinians' mood is not positive and warned that the PA will lose momentum without incorporating a political component alongside its financial platform. End Summary.

Elections Must Include West Bank and Gaza  
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12. (C) On August 23, CEC Chairman Hanna Nasir told USAID and Poloff that Abu Mazen is considering issuing a presidential decree that would change the electoral system from mixed (50 percent constituency/50 percent party list) to 100 percent proportional representation for legislative and presidential elections, make the West Bank, Gaza and Jerusalem a single constituency, and require all presidential and PLC candidates to accept the PLO platform. Nasir described the legal basis for such a decree as "muddy" and said that the elections law should be "apolitical" and not require every candidate to accept the PLO platform. Nasir said he will suggest to Abu Mazen that this clause be inserted into the Basic Law, rather than the elections law which should be outside the realm of politics.

13. (C) Nasir said that if Abu Mazen changes the electoral system to 100 percent proportional representation, the new system will be easier for the CEC to administer, but by changing the rules of the game Abu Mazen would be demonstrating clear bias towards Fatah. He said Fatah lost 2006 PLC elections to Hamas under a mixed system, so if he changes the system to 100 percent proportional representation, the perception will be that Fatah is rigging the system to win. Nasir said a Fatah win is unlikely and that elections could very well bring about the same results: "a head from Fatah and a body from Hamas." He commented that Abu Mazen must deal with the Fatah-Hamas divide because elections will be impossible without both West Bank and Gaza participation.

CEC Ready  
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14. (C) Nasir said that the CEC is prepared to administer presidential and PLC elections. Due to financial problems, the CEC has downsized its offices, but if elections occur, Nasir said the CEC will expand its office space and staff.

Checkpoints Must be Removed

15. (C) Nasir said Abu Mazen and PM Fayyad have delivered on paying government salaries, but rely on the GoI to remove checkpoints and roadblocks in the West Bank or make progress on negotiations. He added that a financial solution can buttress a political solution, but that finances alone are not enough. He said Palestinians' mood is not positive and warned that the government will lose momentum without a credible political component.

DUFFY